

Neighbors of Mo. dumps press EPA for relocation aid

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Neighbors of a St. Louis-area Superfund site visited Washington, D.C., today to request financial assistance to help residents relocate.

The advocacy group Just Moms STL says U.S. EPA hasn't done enough to protect people near Republic Services' Bridgeton Landfill and the adjacent **West Lake Landfill**, a Superfund site that contains radioactive waste. The waste is threatened by an underground fire at the adjacent facility (*Greenwire*, June 20, 2014).

The group was planning to deliver a petition to the D.C. offices of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation in a bid to pressure Microsoft founder Bill Gates to use his authority as a major shareholder of Republic Services to influence the company's policies.

Lois Gibbs, executive director of the Center for Health, Environment and Justice, called EPA's response "outrageous" in a press conference with the group.

Gibbs, who led the Love Canal Homeowners Association to win relocation assistance for 800 families living on top of a former toxic waste dump in Niagara Falls, N.Y., in the 1970s, said relocating the Missouri homeowners was the only way "to protect innocent American families."

EPA Administrator Gina McCarthy "has mismanaged this site for years," Gibbs said in a statement. "Additionally, she relocated (or 'transferred' -- what the EPA does instead of firing) everyone -- including EPA's regional administrator Karl Brooks -- while innocent people are trapped living in fear."

Brooks, who led the Lenexa, Kan.-based Region 7 office since 2010, became EPA's deputy assistant administrator for the Office of Administration and Resources Management, or OARM, earlier this year (*Greenwire*, Feb. 25).

The groups said they tried unsuccessfully to meet with McCarthy today. McCarthy is scheduled to speak at the Allergy and Asthma Network Awards Ceremony in D.C. this evening to discuss how climate change can affect respiratory illnesses, according to her public schedule.

EPA Region 7 spokesman Chris Whitley said the agency is monitoring the sites closely, but the agency has found that relocating residents is not necessary.

The agency "has concluded that the conditions at the site do not present the kind of threat to human health that would require relocation of nearby residents at this time," Whitley said.

"EPA continues to evaluate all site related information with the goal to ensure that all appropriate response actions are considered and implemented consistent with the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation and Liability Act (CERCLA); the National Contingency Plan (NCP); and EPA Superfund program guidance across the entire West Lake Landfill Superfund Site."

The agency is working with the Missouri Department of Natural Resources to reduce sulfur dioxide emissions from the Bridgeton Landfill and to evaluate the underground fire in case it approaches the radioactive waste, according to EPA. The agency says it's also working with the U.S. Geological Survey and the Army Corps of Engineers to develop a final plan for the site.

Republic Services and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation did not respond to requests for comment today.